

[View this email in your browser](#)



Hi <<First Name>>,

By now, you’ve probably noticed that relationships, like friendships, family dynamics, and dating, are becoming a huge part of your teen’s world. That’s not a coincidence. As teens develop, their connections to others play a role in their health and emotional wellbeing.

Healthy relationships don’t just happen. They are built on respect, honesty, trust, equality, and safety. Whether it’s a best friend, a teammate, or someone they’re dating, you want your teen surrounded by people who treat each other well and work through disagreements without hurting or putting each other down.

Red Flags for Unhealthy or Abusive Relationships

Sometimes teens end up in friendships or dating relationships that are not healthy. Here are signs to watch for:

- Saying “I love you” very early on in a relationship (love bombing)
- Feeling scared, controlled, or guilty about normal choices
- Constant jealousy, trying to change someone, or controlling how they dress or who they spend time with
- Repeatedly asking for private photos, videos, or personal information
- Sharing or threatening to share private photos, videos, or information without permission
- Physical violence, name-calling, shaming, or forced sexual contact
- Peer-pressure
- Big or inappropriate age gaps between minors that create a power imbalance in a dating relationship

If you see any of these signs, it may help to check in with your teen and offer support. Reinforce that they deserve to be treated with respect, they should not feel afraid of their partner, and should never feel pressured to do things they do not want to do.

Try This Today

Ask your teen, “What do you think makes a relationship feel safe and respectful?” This helps them practice naming healthy behaviors and spotting unhealthy ones. **It also shows them that you’re open to talking without pressure or judgment.**



Explore more: [Expect Respect: Healthy Relationship Tips for Teens](#)

Talking About Sex and Sexuality

Talking with your teen about sex and sexuality can feel uncomfortable, but these conversations are important. Especially since your child may learn things from other places like their peers, the media, or pornography culture. Talking with your teen can help them stay safe, understand their body, and make healthy choices. Remember, you don’t need to explain everything at once, just keep the conversation open.

Here are some tips to guide you:

- Try making these conversations happen early and often, not just one time
- Try not to solely focus on “don’t-do-this” style messages
- Include the “do’s,” like how to build healthy relationships and make good decisions
- Use words your child can understand and match the level of their questions
- Be honest, clear, and respectful
- Use TV shows, movies, and news stories as easy ways to start conversations
- Ask questions like: “What are your thoughts about...?” instead of giving a lecture
- Keep things general if needed – you don’t always need to go into detail
- Listen more than you talk

If your teen is already sexually active, have open conversations about practicing safe sex and encourage them to talk with their doctor about preventing sexually transmitted infections.

For many families and cultures, discussing sex can feel uncomfortable. Your child’s doctor can be a trusted partner in helping to start and guide these important discussions. These talks help your teen feel supported and show them that they can come to you when they have questions.

Helpful Resources:

- [Adolescent Sexuality: Talk the Talk Before They Walk the Walk](#)
- [Coming Out: Information for Parents of LGBTQ Teens](#)
- [Sex, Gender Identity and Puberty](#)
- [Talking to Your Child About Sex](#)
- [Sexually Transmitted Infections Prevention](#)
- [Love is Respect National Teen Dating Abuse Hotline](#)
- [Dating Matters: Strategies to Promote Healthy Teen Relationships](#)

Tomorrow, we’ll talk about building resilience in teens and simple ways you can help.

With you every step,
The ICAAP Team

Get Connected!



Copyright (C) 2026 Illinois Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics. All rights reserved.

Our mailing address is:
310 South Peoria Street, Suite 304
Chicago, IL 60607

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe](#)

